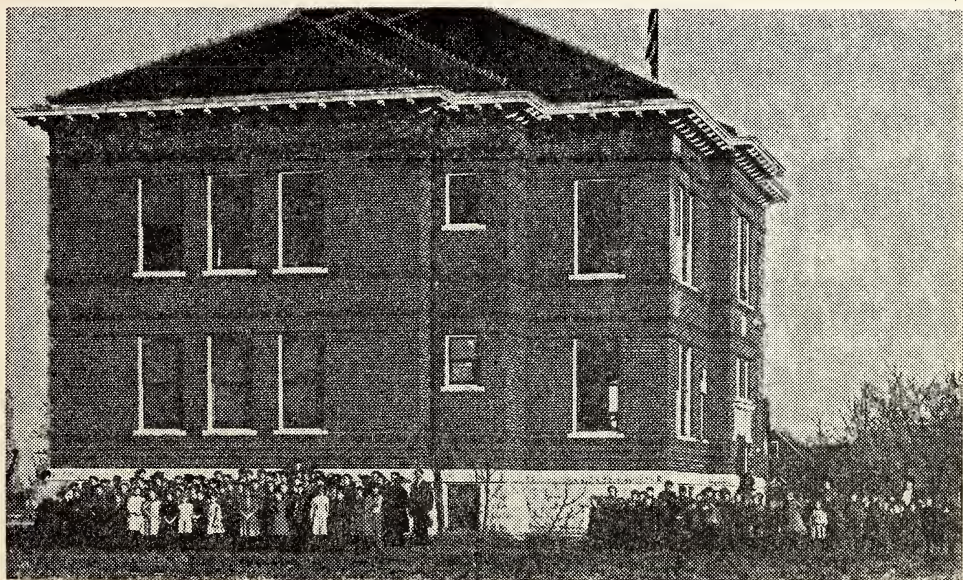


History
of the
Stratford Schools
Stratford, Iowa

Stratford School Buildings



New Grade School Addition 1957



Grade and High School Building 1905

Acknowledgment

Acknowledgment is gratefully made to Elaine Anderson for her assistance in compiling the material used in this brochure. A special 'thank you' also must go to Mrs. Agnes Anderson, '02, Mrs. Daisy Chally, '04, and Miss Hannah Nelson, '04. Without their reminiscences this brochure would be much less complete and interesting.

We have striven for accuracy, but a lack of written records has made it necessary to rely upon the recollections of persons who were students in the earlier schools in this area. We believe, however, that the material contained herein presents a relatively accurate picture of the history of the Stratford Schools. We hope you enjoy it.

This brochure is sponsored by the Stratford Community Schools.

Alaire Swedlund — Editor

When the town of Stratford was founded back in 1880, the first work of the early settlers was to break the prairie sod. But even before the town had been incorporated in 1883, a school had been set up and was in session eight months of the year. The written facts are very few. Information concerning early schools of Stratford has been told mostly by word of mouth from the early scholars themselves.

Memories of My School Days

By Mrs. Agnes Anderson

"Our primary school, a small building with a steeple and bell, was moved from Hook's Point about 1890. It stood where the Funeral Home now stands. When the new school was built, it was sold and moved, and is now the home of Mrs. Grayce Peterson.

"In those days, Stratford had one of the best primary schools west of the Mississippi, or so it was said. We had a wonderful primary teacher, Miss Sadie Hazen. Not only did she read from the Bible, but taught us a song I shall always remember:

'Now before we work today,
Let us not forget to pray.
In our work and in our play,
Help us, Lord, to love today.'

Then we would repeat the Lord's Prayer.

"The school was one large room with about 50 pupils. In the rear were two large cloak rooms, one on either side of the door. Up toward the front was a large brown circle painted on the floor. We would all gather around and sing some songs. Then we would play some games. Once in a while we had a drill or two.

"When we graduated from primary school we usually had a flag drill. At the first commencement exercises in 1896, the eighth grade also took part.

"The first high school was a square frame building on the George Anderson lot. It was built about the time that the grade school moved to town. Downstairs was the intermediate department, and upstairs was the high school (ninth, tenth, and eleventh, only).

"An extra grade was added in 1901, when Prof. J. M. Holaday was teaching. During that time some of the subjects offered were the following: algebra, geometry, civics, physics, higher arithmetic, book-keeping I and II, American history, and grammar. A spelling review was also offered because it was necessary that all students were good spellers.

"At that time, we finished school having only four teachers. Many of the graduates became teachers.

"Prof. Rounkles of Stanhope said that Stratford was the Athens of Hamilton Co. (Athens, as you know, is a place of great learning).

"In primary school, we had a large chart, a globe, colored crayons, a sand table, and 12 large colored pigs. There was also a parrot puzzle that we could work with, if we had our lessons finished.

"We had mantle blackboards around the room, where we wrote and worked problems during recitation. In high school, we had several recitation benches, but in primary, we had only one. The front desks were used instead. There were four rows of seats. Usually one boy and one girl sat together, so they would behave better.

"On the last day of school, each child was given a card with a beautiful bouquet of flowers on it and a treat. Some Friday afternoons we would spell down or cipher down after the last recess."

First School House

The very first schoolhouse was built in 1882 on the Cora Walker property. It was a two-story frame building that cost \$2,200. It was the only school building around, so in it were housed both the upper and lower divisions. In 1890, a building, complete with bell and steeple was moved in from Hook's Point to serve, not only as a school, but also as a church and Sunday School place. This building, now the home of Mrs. Grayce Peterson, was moved from the lot now occupied by the Hanson Funeral Home.

The early teaching staff consisted of from two or four teachers. Names of some most remembered include: Sadie Hazen, J. M. Holaday, Carrie Rehmlom, Louise Naylor, Josie Evans, Esther Fallien, Mary Cloze, Daisy Chally (Milburn), and Minnie Williams. In early days little or no advanced training was required to receive a teaching certificate. Many teachers had only a high school diploma.

Classes became larger and larger, until, in 1905, a new school was built. Bonds were issued in the amount of \$6,000 to cover the cost of this building which was located on the present school grounds, and which is still being used. It now contains seven classrooms, and is being used mostly for junior high.

It soon became evident that even this wasn't enough room. So, in 1927, after a special school election in which bonds of \$50,000 were voted, an addition of about 20 rooms, including a stage and gym, was added to the original. This is the present high school building. In 1956, it was decided that some remodeling should be done. In the 1927 section of the building, you now find a new and modern kitchen (used to serve about 300 lunches daily), lockers and a laundry room. The gymnasium is being used for the lunch room and a meeting room for many organizations. The old stage has been converted into an audio-visual room.

More classroom space was still needed, and this remodeling was just a sideline to the big project going on. In 1956, also, two new additions to our school were made at a cost of \$397,000. A north addition of 16 rooms, as well as a southeast addition of 5 rooms was constructed. The north addition is the grade school now (grades kindergarten - fifth). In it, also, is office space for the superintendent and secretary, a school nurse's room, and a teacher's conference room. One of the new features of the superintendent's office is a walk-in safe.

In the southeast addition is a new homemaking room, a 100x100 foot gymnasium, and a stage with a 72' opening. The coal heating system had now become inadequate, so an oil system was installed at this time also.

Grading System

The school year hasn't always been 180 days, as it is now. Until 1892, pupils attended school four months in the fall and four more months in the spring. The teachers were thus given an opportunity to teach a winter term in the country. In 1892, a nine month school year was set up by A. H. Gardner.

Until 1892, also, Stratford school was just like any other country school. There was no regular system of grades, nor was there a prescribed course of study. Pupils were grouped according to their ability to read. The older students, if they were ambitious and wanted to learn more, were permitted to take up any subject that they wanted to (if the teacher knew anything about the subject, had a book for it, and had time for the class). These classes were almost always held after regular school hours.

Here is an example of an early prescribed course of study:

NINTH GRADE — arithmetic, physiology, grammar, U. S. history, and civics.

TENTH GRADE — arithmetic ($4\frac{1}{2}$ months), algebra ($4\frac{1}{2}$ months), physical geography, Latin rhetoric.

ELEVENTH GRADE — algebra, botany, bookkeeping, general history, English history (four months).

TWELFTH GRADE — geometry, physics, American literature ($4\frac{1}{2}$ months), English history ($4\frac{1}{2}$ months), economics.

Until 1890 there were two divisions, upper and lower rooms. In this year the third division was made. The three departments were primary, grades 1 and 2; intermediate, grades 3 and 4; and grade 5, the advanced. Two years later, the grades were increased up to 11 by A. H. Gardner, and under J. M. Holaday, this school became an accredited high school with 12 grades. Kindergarten was not officially added until about 1948. However, as early as 1935-1936, Mrs. Swan Shaeffer had taught a nursery class.

Grading has also changed. It used to be something like this:

E	-----	excellent	-----	90%-100%
G	-----	good	-----	80%- 90%
P	-----	poor	-----	70%- 80%
F	-----	failure	-----	0%- 70%

Now teachers grade using the letters A, B, C, D, and F. It is done on either a curve or percentage, or a combination of the two.

Some of the early text books used were: Hyde's LANGUAGE and GRAMMAR; White's ARITHMETIC; Harper's GEOGRAPHY; Harvey's GRAMMER; Barne's READER; Maxwell's or Metcalf's GRAMMAR; Ray's ARITHMETIC; Reed and Kellogg's GRAMMAR; Green's Advanced GRAMMAR; Barne's HISTORY; Steele's PHYSIOLOGY; Harper's PENMANSHIP; and McGuffey's READER.

It was in a two-room building in 1896, or 67 years ago, that the first high school class was graduated in the pioneer settlement of Stratford. The group was made up of two members, Vina Norton, and Otto S. Von Krog. Since that time there have been 913 graduates from this school at Stratford.

The oldest living alumna is Mrs. Nellie Harmon Hamilton, who was graduated in 1898. The next older living alumnae are Belle M. Swanson, the class of 1900, and Mrs. Agnes Erickson Anderson, class of 1902. The first graduation exercises were usually held in the Methodist Church, with each of the graduates giving an original oration.

In 1904 the Stratford Alumni was organized, and a banquet was held at the home of Supt. Holaday. The class that year was the largest that had graduated (12 students). This was authorized as the first alumni banquet and the banquets are still held annually. Mrs. Harold Scott has never missed a banquet since her graduation in 1924.

Stratford High has also had several sets of twins graduate. According to the records, they include: Irma and Inez Hakes in 1920, Vincel and Virginia Crim in 1944, Ginger and Dixie Fisher in 1960, and Jana and Jean Bell in 1961.

Hot Lunch Program

In the early days, all students had to bring their own lunch from home. In 1945, Mrs. Charles Kent was hired as the first school cook. She prepared lunches for 80-100 students each day. These meals cost about $12\frac{1}{2}$ c per day. But this wasn't the first time hot dishes were served in school. About 1922, two of the high school home economics students would go down and prepare one hot dish. This was done only on winter days and for the rural students only. At this time there were no rural grade school students involved as they were attending the country schools in their districts. In the 1950's the Stratford School started to receive state aid for the lunches. At the present time about 4c per lunch served is paid for from state funds, most of which come to the states from the federal government. Also, several times each year some food products are distributed to the schools by the state department of public instruction. This year about 300 students are served lunches each day at a cost of 25c per lunch, which includes a balanced lunch and milk.

Transportation

Transportation has always been a problem. The first bus was used to haul students from Yell Township. In 1936, C. L. Carlson was hired at \$20 per month to haul the students. This was very successful until the bridge went out in the spring. In 1944, \$5 per month was charged for students who lived outside the district to ride on the bus. High school students were charged \$2.50 per month to ride on the bus if they were residents of the district. In 1945, the first school bus was purchased at a cost of \$1,385.76. At this time, there was only one bus in use. The number increased, until now there are nine buses, seven of which are used for the regular route. Each bus now costs about \$6,000. In 1962, a Travelall was purchased for use on school trips where the regular bus is not needed.

Extra - Curricular Activities

Perhaps one of the big changes in the school system relates to the extra-curricular activities. In the early days they were forbidden. The class of 1896 had little musical training, except for a few group songs. They received no physical education. About 1920, the first school annual was published (The Dial). A school newspaper was also being printed then.

At the present time there are many school activities, most of which are conducted after school and in the evenings. Our school has basketball, softball, baseball, vocal music, instrumental music, speech, physical education, class

plays, annual, newspaper, student council, Future Teachers Association, Pep Club, Future Business Leaders Association, Future Homemakers Association.

Baseball and basketball were started in 1921. The first basketball game was played in Shaeffer's Hall, in 1921, with both boys and girls participating. Earlier there was a cement court on the southeast corner of the school grounds. When the first addition was constructed in 1927, a gymnasium was included. The new gym, built in 1956, has a seating capacity of 1,200 for athletic events, and if the floor is used, the capacity increases to 1,400. This new gym readily enables Stratford to host many of the larger musical and sports events.

School Costs

The cost of running a school has changed considerably. About 1902 (when the school became accredited) the Stratford Independent School District was formed and the tax funds became available. In 1906, a record of the tax certificate listed levies of \$1,200 for the schoolhouse fund, \$1,200 for the teacher's fund, and \$2,000 in the contingent fund, or a total of \$4,400. By 1918 the school levy was listed as \$11,500. Now a levy of \$200,000 is needed to operate the school per year. The school district was reorganized in 1954, and has since been known as the Stratford Community School District, with a taxable valuation of \$4,600,000.

Not only has the cost of running the school mounted, but a text book used to cost about \$1.00. Compare the present cost of at least \$4.00 to that. In 1892, a teacher was paid \$29.00 for teaching 60 days. In the early 1900's a teacher's salary was about \$40.00 per month, with the superintendent's receiving \$75.00. By 1917, salaries for the staff averaged about \$70.00 - \$85.00 per month. The average salary today is approximately \$530.00 per month depending upon the teacher's experience and training. Tuition costs have risen also. It now costs more to go to school for a month than it cost in 1910 to go for the whole year (\$40.00 per month now as compared to \$31.50 per year in 1910).

The school at Stratford started as a small two-room school, costing \$2,200. Now, pupils are attending classes in the original (1905) \$6,000 structure, in the \$50,000 structure erected in 1927, and in the \$397,000 addition completed in 1956.

From an early enrollment of about 50, to the present figure of 400 enrolled in the 13 grades, we see evidence of growth. A projection of the growth pattern seems to indicate that the Stratford Schools will show a slow but consistent growth in enrollment for some years ahead.

What will the schools of the future for Stratford students look like? What subjects will be taught? Where will the school be located? How will the education of the future be different from the present? These questions have answers. Who knows them?



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014



